Akathist hymn to Saint Valeriu Gafencu the New Confessor of the Romanian Communist Prisons (also known under the/his ultimate title "The Saint of the Prisons")

Feast day – 18 February

Kontakion 1:

Him who, fulfilling the word of the Gospel, has shone as a candle from which bundles of candles were lighted in the darkness of the prisons, come, you lovers of asceticism, let us honor him as a teacher of self-sacrifice, patience, and fruit-bearing love, and let us sing to him: Rejoice, long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Ikos 1:

Your preaching has reached us, O chosen confessor: "The Lord of glory calls you to the light, the martyrs call you to eternity; fortify the Christian Church with living stones, built on foundations." And willing to follow your exhortation, we pray to you to be our swift defender, that we may sing with one voice:
Rejoice, crown of the Church and treasure of the Romanian nation;
Rejoice, you are the joy of the faithful and a divine gift;
Rejoice, new apostle who in the dungeons preached the right faith;
Rejoice, for you have hidden your graces in a humble garment;
Rejoice, thou kin of the martyrs of the first Christian ages;
Rejoice that the land of Bessarabia glorifies itself through you;
Rejoice that from childhood you have been under heavenly blessing;
Rejoice that you were called to the service of God and neighbor;
Rejoice, that thy youth was sealed with virginity and holiness;
Rejoice, that in fighting temptations you were a lover of purity;

Rejoice, that from thy father's courage thou hast learned to stand firm in trouble;
Rejoice, that thou fearedst neither death nor tribulation;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ's sake!

Kontakion 2:

Having great reverence for the Most Holy Theotokos, you did not hesitate to say to others, "The Mother of God answers my prayers," in order to increase their hope in her heavenly protection. And she, appearing to you in the prison in a marvelous way, answered your prayer, saying to you, 'I am your love. Fear not. Do not doubt. My Son shall be victorious." For this we, seeing how God has ordained that you be strengthened to bear your cross without murmuring, sing to Him: Alleluia!

Ikos 2:

You have seen the Blessed Virgin, the hope of the despairing and the joy of the sorrowful, bearing witness that Christ sanctified the prison in which you suffered for Him, together with other martyrs, laymen, monks and priests, so that those who are now and those who will come after us may learn from your sacrifice. Her holy words banish from us all doubt in your holiness, and for this we praise you:
"Rejoice, for being under the protection of the Mother of God, you have turned the prison into a monastery cell;
Rejoice, of the holy fragrance which God hath shed in the world;
Rejoice, young man, who sought the love that is imperishable;
Rejoice that your virtues shone before others like the sun;
Rejoice that the Blessed Virgin guided you in the way of purity;
Rejoice that under her holy covering you lived a holy life;

Rejoice, the trust of those who choose the way of virginity;
Rejoice, O branch of humility and flower of joy;
Rejoice that you have honored the saints and entered into their council;
Rejoice, O ark over which the Holy Spirit is poured out;
Rejoice, that in mourning for your sins you have known the tenderness of humility;
Rejoice, that the flame of your heart was kindled by heavenly longing;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 3:

You have shown yourself to be a wise teacher, saying that "every true joy is gained by sacrifice; every city is conquered by courage, faith, boldness, trust in the mission given by God, and above all by prayer." For which we, nourished by your teachings, sing to God, who has made you wise, " Alleluia!

Ikos 3:

You have been, my martyr, a philosopher of the Philokalia written in blood and a skillful teacher of the prayer of Jesus, showing yourself to be a silent follower of the great Fathers of old. You found peace of heart and encouraged others to seek it, saying: "in struggling against the powers of darkness, with God in mind, I found peace in prayer." And we, wishing to walk the way you have walked, say to you:
Rejoice that through the prayer of Jesus your heart has become an altar;
"Rejoice, that your soul has been filled with grace;

Rejoice, that by praying to the Holy Archangel Michael you have become an angel in the flesh;
Rejoice, that by the beauties of the kingdom of heaven your soul was wounded;
Rejoice, O blessing to those who suffer with you;
Rejoice, evermore, O you, who art ever a guide to do good;
Rejoice, O that thou didst counsel them to beware of unmeasured pride;
Rejoice, for those who honor you marvel at your life;
Rejoice, for they begin to praise thee with the angelic host;
Rejoice, O pyre kindled by the living God in the wilderness of the jail;
Rejoice, that by your prayers we are delivered from the passions of lust and wrath;
Rejoice, O Valerius, long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 4:
For your ascetic struggles, your sufferings and your prayers you received the grace of clairvoyance, which was enjoyed by those who suffered with you. And to one of these you prophesied: 'there will come a time in your life when your heart will sing its own prayer', and when your words were fulfilled, he sang to God: Hallelujah!

Ikos 4:
Lying on your bed of suffering, on the night of Holy Easter, you saw by the gift of God in the distance the faithful who came from the hermitage after the Divine Liturgy, coming down with lighted candles. By what a miracle those imprisoned with you realized the extent of your increase, that the chains and walls of the prison could not enclose your pure soul. And for this we praise you, saying:

Rejoice that the Holy Spirit has dwelt in your heart;
Rejoice that God has given you great gifts;
Rejoice, that you have known many things that are to come before;
Rejoice that the day of your departure to the Lord you have known before;
Rejoice, that he to whom thou hast revealed this mystery hath trusted in thy increase;
Rejoice, that in the fulfillment of the prophecy he testified of your holiness;
Rejoice that the news of your graces in prison has spread;
Rejoice, that, fleeing from pride, you have multiplied the talents received from above;
Rejoice, that by the gift of the Lord's favor you help those who pray to you;
Rejoice, for those who ask of you know that you work wonders;
"Rejoice, for you have received heavenly graces;
Rejoice, that now with the angels you worship God;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 5:

To those who urged you, in the last days of your holy life, to spare what little strength you had left and to speak as little as possible, you requested: "Do not take this joy from me, for I live to bear witness to Christ; and if I live, it is by his mercy that I live, and without showing you the love I bear you, it would be useless for me to live." And we, seeing in you the icon of love that is unfeigned, we praise God, who has put this virtue of great price in your heart, singing to him, ' Alleluia!

Ikos 5:

You were an example to those imprisoned with you, humbling yourself and putting your neighbor's well-being before your own. You loved the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and modeled your life after the words of Christ, sacrificing yourself for your neighbor and climbing the ladder of virtue, and for this we praise you:
Rejoice, that in giving to others, you have gained more of God;
Rejoice, that by giving your garment to the needy you have given to Christ;
Rejoice, for as the widow's two pennies were your alms;
Rejoice that those who heard of the deed of your love were humbled;
Rejoice, O willing giver, who hast received God's reward;
Rejoice, O thou who showest the way to the heavenly kingdom;
Rejoice, who, following the word of the Gospel, have shown thyself a model of mercy;
Rejoice, that being ashamed of your works, we flee from the lust of covetousness;
Rejoice, O soldier of Christ, who for his love sacrificed yourself;
Rejoice, holy martyr, that your works have blossomed in our hearts;
Rejoice that through your prayers our hearts, hardened, as wax are melted;
Rejoice, that even those who are stubborn are now diligent to do good;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 6:

We have heard your wise counsel, "In all circumstances pray to God that his will be done." And willing to know and to do the will of God, denying our own will, and fleeing from the temptations of the evil one, we chant to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 6:

Being the new Job, holy one, with great patience you bore the cross of sickness, showing us also how we should receive the trials that come upon us. By God's mercy, you endured the sufferings of a martyr when the doctor cut your body without the numbing cure having done its work, for which, as we marvel, we chant to you:
Rejoice, that in enduring fearful pains thou hast pondered Him crucified;
"Rejoice, that the devil of despair could not bring you to your knees;
Rejoice, O thou, the cure sent by God to the body oppressed by sickness;
"Rejoice, O thou, the refuge of those burdened by unhealable diseases;
Rejoice, O Saint, that thou banish impatience from the sick who pray to thee;
Rejoice, for you reward those who care for the sick;
Rejoice, thou new and penniless physician, who healest by prayer;
Rejoice, you are a persecutor of devils and a deliverer of the poor;
Rejoice, for thou hast counselled us to deny our will;
Rejoice, that thou hast bid us to embrace the will of God;
Rejoice that you exhort us to leave all worldly cares;
Rejoice that you strengthen us to do God's will;
Rejoice, long-suffering Valerius, strengthen those who are persecuted for Christ's sake!

Kontakion 7:

"The end of my life is a last Orthodox confession. I would be very glad if you would return to the true Church," you said from your deathbed to the doctor deceived by the teachings of the heretic Luther and prayed for his coming to the true Church. Willing to

share in your zeal for the salvation of those who stand far from the Truth, we sing to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 7:

"He who believes without being a missionary has not known the beauty of faith" - you said, my martyr, kindling in us the fire of the confession of Christ. And by your deeds you reinforced these words, for you sacrificed yourself out of love for a Jewish pastor, praying that he might become a son of the Holy Church and giving him the medicine that could have saved your life. For this boundless love we sing to thee:

Rejoice, for you have been a tireless worker in God's pasture;
Rejoice, for thou hast been a light in the darkness of the prison;
Rejoice, who showed the Jewish pastor a martyrical love;
Rejoice that your sacrifice has begun to bear fruit in our souls;
Rejoice, thou valiant guardian of the teachings of the church;
Rejoice, you who resist unorthodox teachings;
Rejoice, who, loving heretics, hast defamed the flood of error;
Rejoice, that without fear thou hast seen the wickedness of their lies;
Rejoice, that by obeying you some men have repented of their sins;
Rejoice, that when they believed your preaching in the hope of the resurrection, they departed to the Lord;
Rejoice, that they have been delivered from condemnation and eternal torment;
Rejoice, for they have testified before God of your good works;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 8:

The waves of life throw us into the whirlpool of the passions, fearless confessor, and it is easier for us to choose the broad way, to

which the devil calls us. But we keep your word in our hearts: "You must oppose sin to the point of blood. That is how you are born again. There is no way of compromise", and fighting the good fight we chant to God: Hallelujah!

Ikos 8:

"How will you be able to withstand the great trials to which we are subjected, if you cannot resist the temptation to smoke?" you asked the young man who did not realize that by his sin he was taking away from him divine grace; and he, humbled before your rebuke, not only understood his mistake, but changed his whole life. And we, taking note of his correction, and praying to you to help us to deliver us from all our passions, give you this praise:

Rejoice, that those who honor thee keep their minds from evil thoughts;

"Rejoice, that by casting away the wisdom of this age they sanctify themselves;

"Rejoice, that by writing for us the book of confessions, you have made manifest the abominations of sin;

"Rejoice, O Saint, who art a stronghold against the passions and lusts;

O rejoice, that thou hast led us to the confessional, that we may escape the burden of sins;

"Rejoice that thou hast exhorted men to obey their confessor;

"Rejoice, that you keep us from partaking unworthily of the sacraments;

O rejoice, that by prayer you restrain the storm of our passions;

O rejoice, who in times of debauchery hast been a model of purity;

Rejoice, who in times of worldly riches hast been a lover of poverty;

Rejoice, who, not being a monk, kept the monastic vows;

'"Rejoice, who, having attained to holiness, lead us to holiness;

Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 9:
Wanting to awaken us from the numbness that has seized us, Servant of God, you wrote that "sin is the second crucifixion of the Savior; now those who are baptized spit in his face, now the crown of thorns is laid on him by those who call themselves Christians, now they spank him, now they beat him with spikes, now they thrust him with the spear, for whom he suffered mockings and beatings and for whom he gave his blood on Calvary." That we may be kept from such a fall, we chant to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 9:
"Christians cannot receive the tempting peace of Satan, Christians will receive nothing but the peace of Christ, however many sacrifices may be required of them", your word echoed in the jails, like that of the Baptizer in the wilderness. O Martyr, will we know how to receive your word when the Herods of our times ask us to receive the false peace of denying Christ? That we may stand firm in time of trial, we pray to you:
Rejoice, for the righteous peace according to God you have striven;
Rejoice, for your inner peace has tamed the prison guards;
Rejoice, O sword of the word, rebuker of transgressions;
Rejoice, O truth that scatters the clouds of lies;
Rejoice, O comfort in times of trouble;
Rejoice, O thou, the reprover of soul-destroying hypocrisy;
O rejoice, O righteous guide of the humble;
Rejoice, silent guardian of monasteries;
Rejoice, O priestly helper in preaching;
Rejoice, of hierarchs eager for support;

Rejoice, O path to the Rising Sun;
Rejoice, O torch of lovers of truth and disciple of the Truth;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 10:
"I am happy to die for Christ. Everything is a miracle. As far as I am allowed, from wherever I am, I will pray for you and I will be with you," you said on the last day of your life, testifying to your care for those close to you. And we, pondering your glorious end, sing to him who called you into his kingdom: Alleluia!

Ikos 10:
Being persecuted for Christ's sake, you have confessed that you feel as your friend every soul that thinks of you with Christian love. Will you not receive our love and honor? Daring, we pray to you, holy one, asking you to receive our little praise:
Rejoice, your soul delights in eternal beauties;
Rejoice, friend of those who follow your teachings;
"Rejoice, who with the host of saints pray for us;
"Rejoice, that by your prayers we are delivered from need;
Rejoice, thou Saint, that in prison you strengthened those wavering in the faith;
Rejoice, for in patience you have overcome the obstinate;
Rejoice, you who were not ashamed when you were wrongfully slandered;
Rejoice, you who have shown boldness in the face of persecutors;
Rejoice, that while yet in the flesh thou hast foretold eternal happiness;
Rejoice, that seeing thy increase, others were filled with wonder;
Rejoice, seed of holiness sown in the dungeon of earth;

Rejoice, faithful servant of the New Covenant;
Rejoice, long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 11:
Your word has come true, holy one, that "death for Christ brings eternal life". For as you were leaving this world, one of those with whom you suffered together saw you in a dream ascending to heaven on a throne of light, and when he heard of your passing to the Lord, he sang to the Lover of men: Alleluia!

Ikos 11:
"Here will one day be a place of pilgrimage", prophesied the Venerable Gherasim, asking you to pray for him. And from this glorious confessor, who from the priory of Tismanea went to the dungeon of Targu Ocna, being your brother in suffering, teaching us to ask you to pray for us also, we say to you:
"Rejoice, you who have been justly called a saint of prisons;
Rejoice, who in your holiness have been likened to the great martyrs;
Rejoice, that the crowd of pilgrims who come to Targu Ocna has increased;
Rejoice, that the prophecy of the Blessed Gherasim about this prison has been fulfilled;
Rejoice that together with the new confessors from all over the world you glorify Christ;
Rejoice, for you are rejoicing with the congregation of the martyrs in the Romanian prisons;
Rejoice that you have exhorted us to honor the new martyrs;
Rejoice, that by following your teaching we gain much profit;

Rejoice, that by prayer the impatience of those imprisoned with you in patience is changed;
"Rejoice that you blessed them as St. Demetrios blessed Nestor;
"Rejoice that with you they have received the heavenly reward;
Rejoice, for they, strengthened in faith, have confessed the eternal Truth;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 12:
To the woman who risked her life, coming to you secretly one night, you requested: "Please testify to the people and to my dear family that I have believed to the end, that I am reconciled, that I lay down my life for Christ and for my fellow men." And we, taking the boldness to testify to the people of your martyr's sufferings, we chant to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 12:
Holy Martyr Valerius, being confident of your holiness, we pray to God that through your prayers He may give us the strength to make a good beginning of our salvation. We believe that you pray for all who come to you in hope, and for this we sing to you:
Rejoice, O lily chosen among the flowers of the flowers of martyrdom;
Rejoice, that from sorrow you have come into the kingdom of joy;
"Rejoice, thou shining beacon for the ages to come;
Rejoice, our intercessor before the Just Judge;
Rejoice, heavenly comfort to those in the fire of temptation;
Rejoice, who shamest and confound the work of devils;
O rejoice, O mighty shield in the time of persecution of Christians;
O rejoice, who urge us to follow in the footsteps of the martyrs;

Rejoice, O fruit of the Gospel that has sprung up in the Romanian nation;
Rejoice that the righteous of other nations honor you with piety;
Rejoice that your praise is proclaimed throughout the Church;
Rejoice, that through you Christ is glorified;
Rejoice, O long-suffering Valerius, Strength of those persecuted for Christ!

Kontakion 13:
O St. Valeriu, crown of the Romanian martyrs of the persecution of the twentieth century, be our heavenly defender! You see, O holy one, the devil's deceitful snares, you see the passions that beset us, you see the helplessness of our souls. But see also our hope in the help from on high, and come and bring us out of the fire of trials, that when we reach the heavenly kingdom we may sing with you to the living God: Aleluia! (This Kontakion is said three times. Then the first Ikos is said: Thy preaching has come to us... and the first Kontakion: To him who fulfills the word of the Gospel...)

Then this is read:

Prayer to Saint Valeriu Gafencu:
St. Valerius, new confessor of the faith in Christ, we run to you as to a speedy helper of all who pray to you. See, O holy one, our sorrows, see our weaknesses, see the poverty of our faith, and do not be ashamed of our idleness and our nothingness.
We beseech thee, O holy one, hasten to help us with thy unceasing and holy prayers, and sustain us. We know that you have endured hard persecutions for the love of Christ, but through patience you have received gifts from God and today you live in the light of heaven. Your blessed deeds have made us call you to our aid. We

are confident that whoever comes to you in faith and asks for help, you do not overlook him.
Lift us up from the pit of fear into which the devil the enemy has cast us, and raise us up in the way of the confession of faith in the true God. Be a model to us, a guide to us, for the enemy's snares are skillful, and we do not know how to avoid them. Pray that we may be kept from deceit and receive from God the gift of right reckoning. Help those who have fallen into sin to repent through your prayers, just as you have helped sinners by your word in the prisons you have passed through.
Pray, holy martyr, for our spiritual leaders, that they may guide us on the right path. Pray for all priests and deacons, may God give them the courage to sow the word of the Gospel where it is needed. Pray for the Orthodox hierarchs, that they may tend the flock in the fear of God, without fear of the world's great ones. Take care, St. Valerius, of all the monks and nuns, being their supporter and guardian, so that having you as their praying companion they may increase in spiritual labor and virtue.
Take care, O holy one, of all those persecuted for Christ's sake, that they may endure with martyric patience, without murmuring. Take care also for their persecutors, praying for them as you prayed for those who persecuted you.
Strengthen us, O holy one, in the struggle we are waging for our salvation, so that in thanksgiving to you we may praise and bless and glorify the most blessed and all-holy name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer for the glorification of the new martyrs
O Lord, our God, who kept safe the three young men and Daniel in the furnace of fire, who strengthened the witnesses of the last

persecution to bear good testimony before the persecutors, receive this little prayer from us.
Sow their sacrifice as a seed in the soil of our hearts. May this seed bring forth good fruit, may it be to us a good beginning of salvation, and may it give us the courage to confess the truth in the face of those who mock it. Grant, O Lord, that their example may not be forgotten, but that the sons and daughters of the Church the most just may be nourished by it. Grant that their virtues and their sacrifice may rebuke our idleness and our neglect, and that we may receive this rebuke for our correction.
St. Mary Magdalene once asked for your body, saying to the Gardener, "Lord, tell me where you have laid it, and I will take it away." In the same way we fall before you, praying to you in the hope that you will forgive our boldness and will not overlook our request: 'Lord, show us the places where the holy relics of your confessors are, that when we find them we may honor them with piety. And if by reason of our sins we have not been worthy to worship them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with a broken heart, that thou, O Lord, will not let the holy relics of thy servants be forgotten, but bring them to light, that they may receive the veneration due to them.
That, venerating them with piety, we may also be able to enjoy their honor in your Church, as is their due, together with the company of the holy men and women martyrs. And with them may we bring glory, honor and worship to thee, O God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our brother, the confessor Valeriu Gafencu, has been vibrating in our souls for almost 60 years, since he was martyred for Christ and

has truly shown himself to be one of the defenders and confessors of our ancestral Christian life.
I would be glad that this akathist hymn, dedicated to our martyr Valeriu Gafencu, may be on the lips and in the hearts of all Romanians who want to give their lives for Christ and their neighbor.
May the Lord accept your prayer and send you this confessor of Romanian Orthodoxy, an unadorned guardian of Romanian Orthodoxy in the face of the temptations of this age.

NOTES

1. The original Akathist in Romanian can be read here: https://www.bisericaculunaoradea.ro/acatistul-noului-mucenic-valeriu-gafencu-sfantul-inchisorilor/
2. An audio version of this Akathist can be listened to in Romanian on YouTube
3. People can read about Saint Valeriu Gafencu on OrthoChristian in English here: https://orthochristian.com/90761.html

4. A more detailed book about his life is translated into English. It's called "The Saint of the Prisons" by Monk Moses and can be bought here or it can be listened to on YouTube here.

5. Holy Confessor Valeriu Gafencu recently showed himself to his still living sister and told her to urge the people to keep searching for his relics as the people are gonna find him eventually. – Source

6. There is a possibility that the relics of Valeriu Gafencu might just have been found. It's not 100% certain though.
   Details here:
   https://danielvla.wordpress.com/2022/05/19/istoricul-marius-oprea-spune-ca-este-posibil-sa-fi-gasit-moastele-lui-valeriu-gafencu/

7. Here is the Saint's Wikipedia page in Romanian:
https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valeriu_Gafencu

And here is his Wikipedia page in English:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valeriu_Gafencu

8. In May 2022 the first ever Church dedicated to All Romanian Saints from Communist Prisons was consecrated in Romania. The news is here (with photos): https://r3media.ro/eveniment-epocal-se-sfinteste-prima-biserica-din-romania-dedicata-martirilor-si-marturisitorilor-din-temnitele-comuniste-foto/

The video of its consecration is here on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/zdBjLrB6vXo?feature=shared

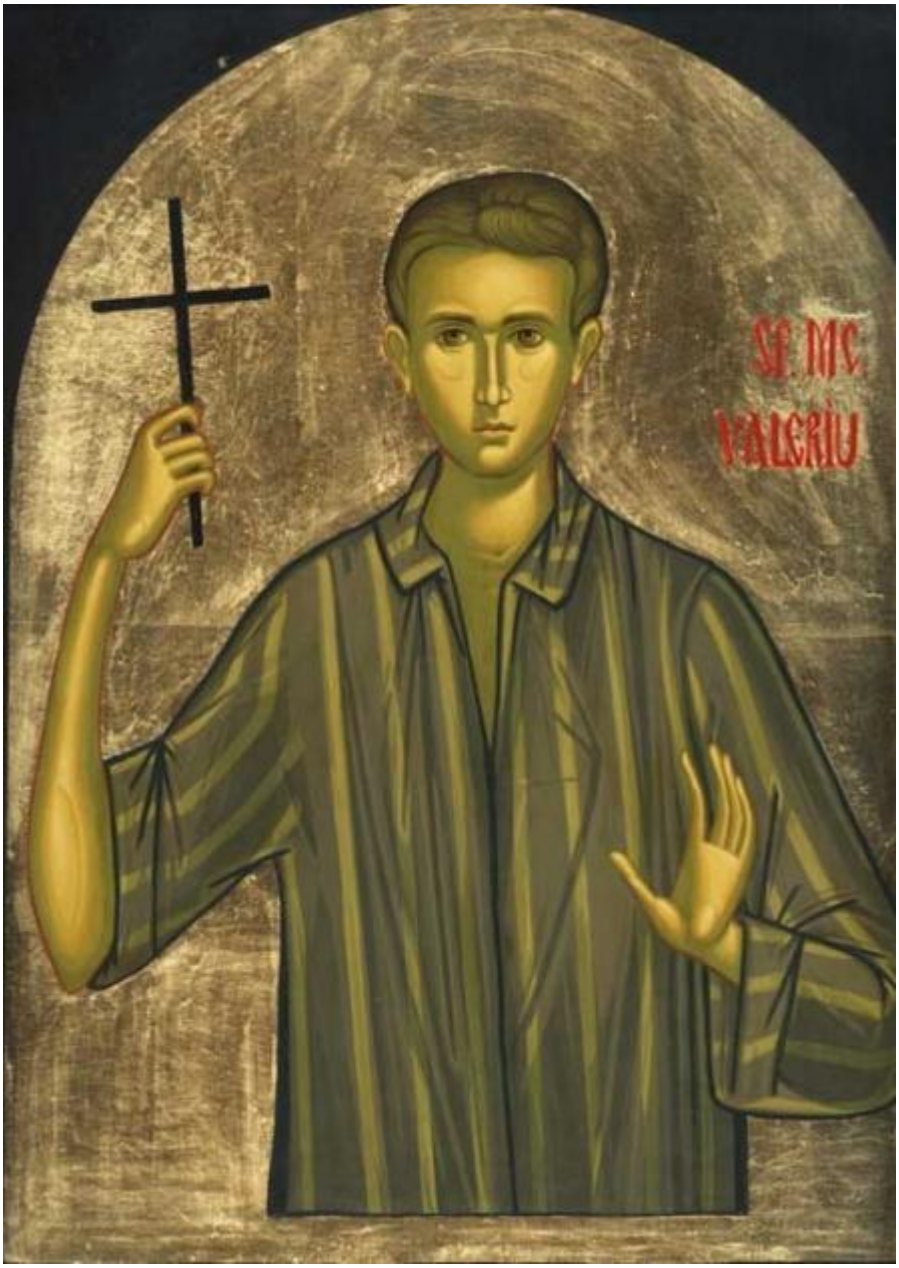
And here you have the Facebook page of the Church:
https://www.facebook.com/duhovniculinchisorilor/?locale=ro_RO

ICONS:

CREDINTA ȘI NEAMUL TĂU, IAR APOI ÎN TEMNIȚĂ MAI LUMINAT AI STRĂLUCIT
PRIN RUGĂCIUNE, STRĂDANIA TUTUROR IUBIȚI PE DUMNEZEU ȘI VEȚI AFLA DAR VEȘNIC. NIMIC SĂ NU CUTEZI
MĂRTURISITORUL
SFÂNTUL
VALERIU
ÎNCHISORILOR

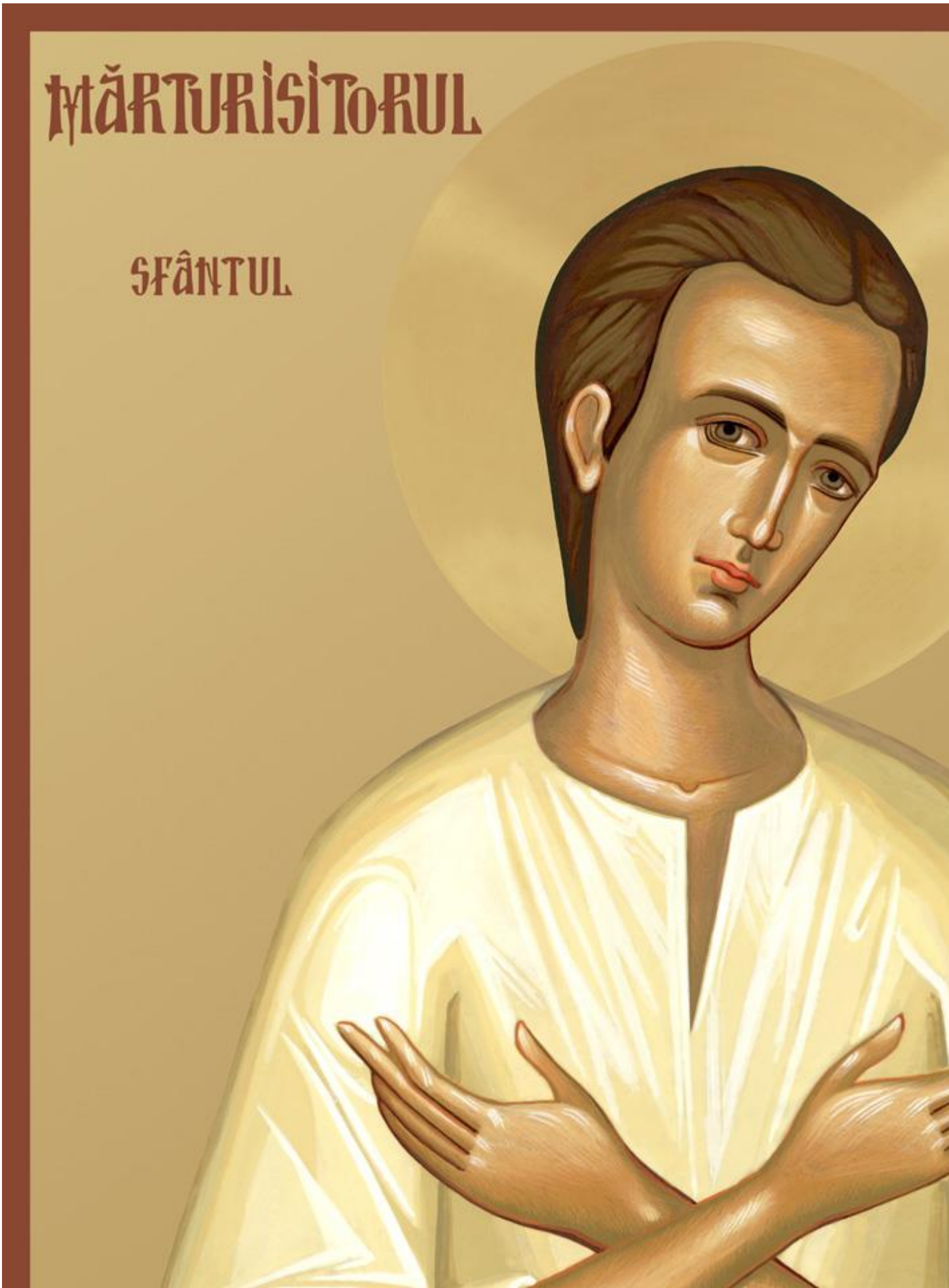
MĂRTURISITORUL
„SFÂNTUL
VALERIU GAFENCU
ÎNCHISORILOR"
+1952 Tg. Ocna

SF.
MC.
VA
LE
RIU


SF. MC.
VALERIU

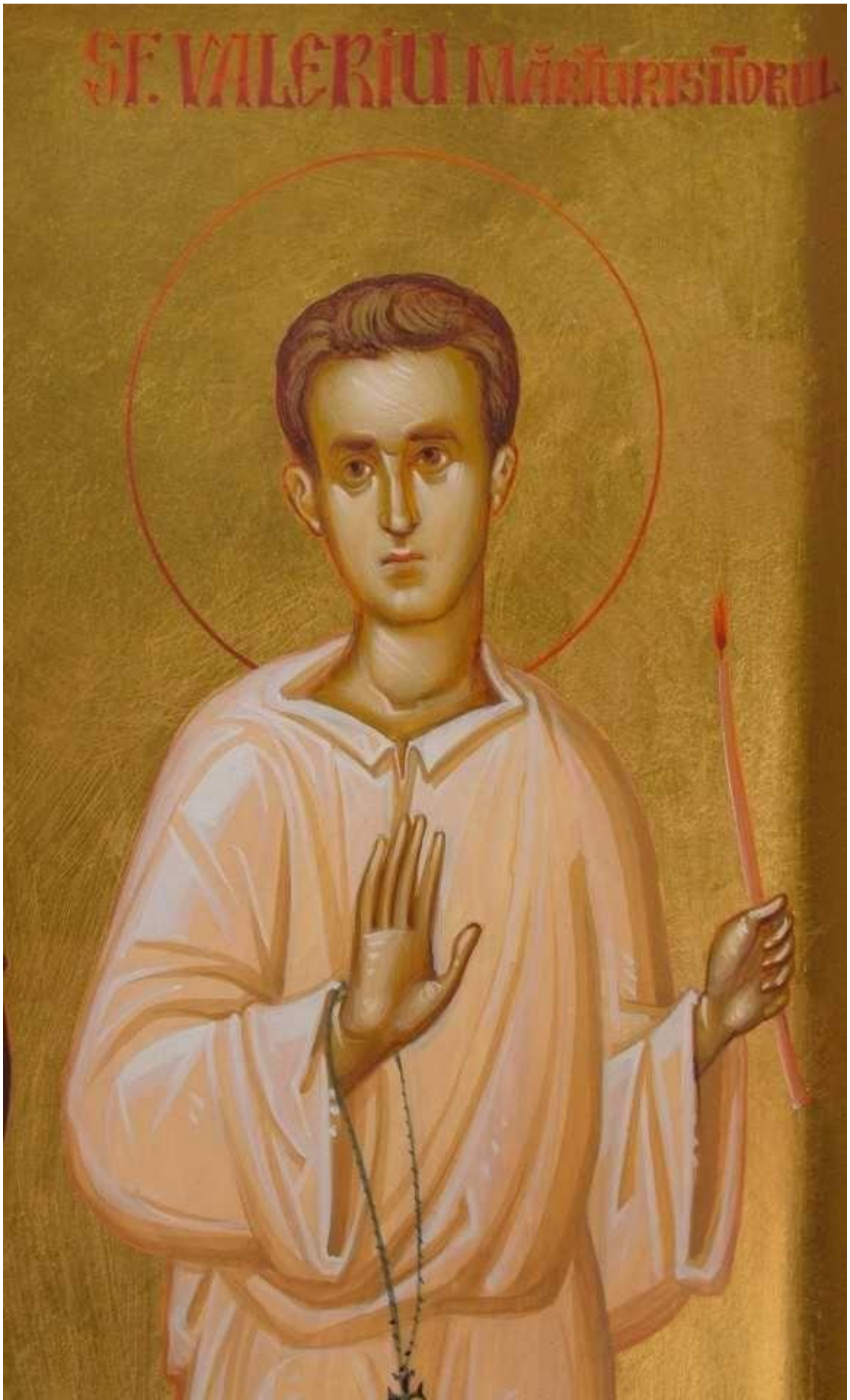
MĂRTURISITORUL

SFÂNTUL

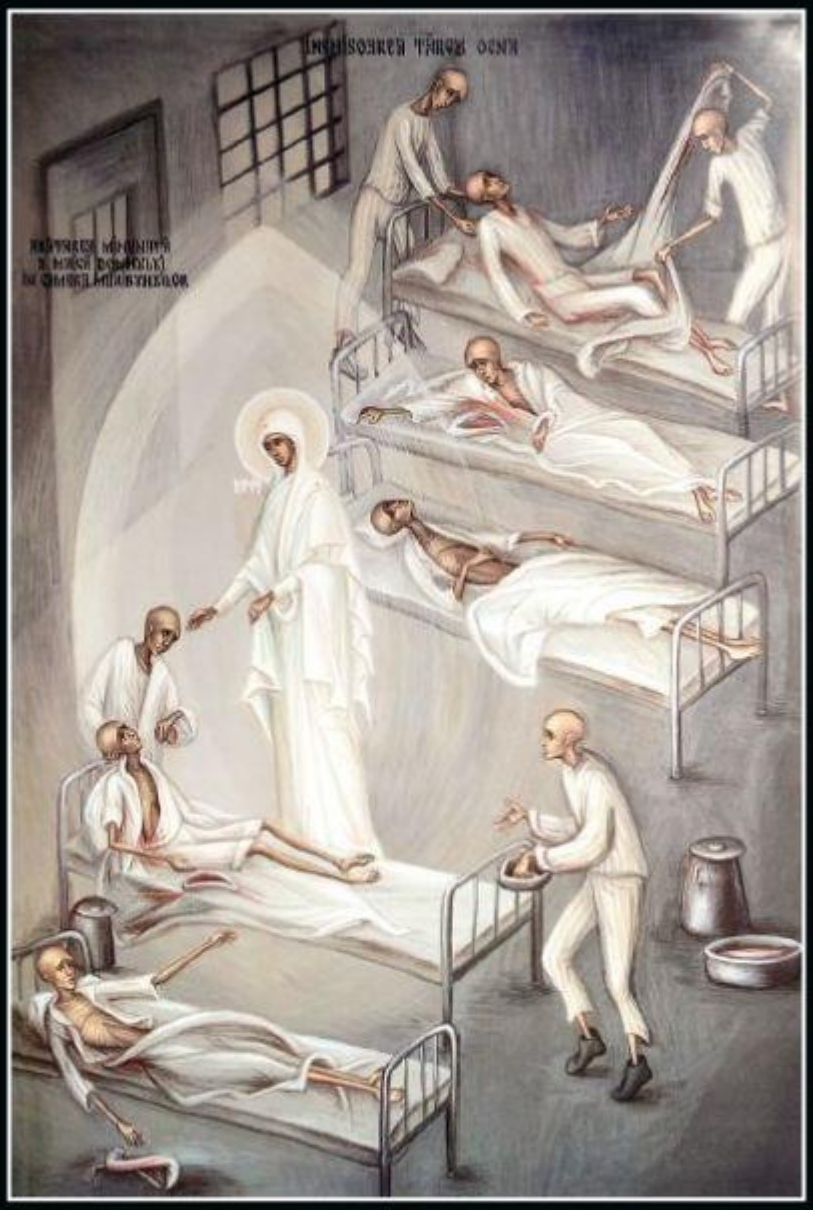


MUCENICUL·VALERIU·GA

MUCENICUL·VALERIU·GAFENCU

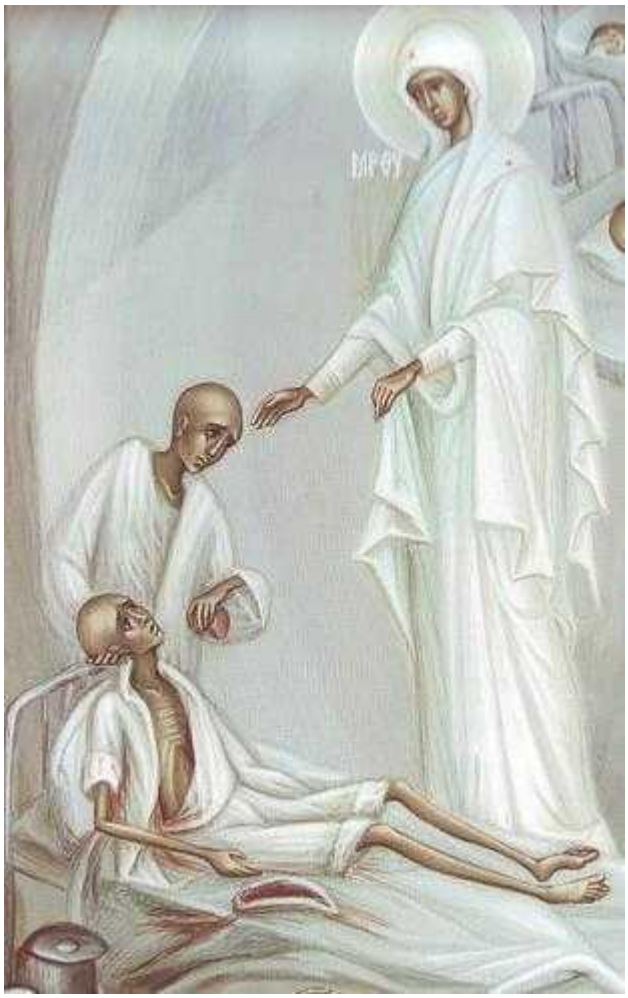

SF. VALERIU MĂRTURISITORUL

Octavian Anastasescu



LÂNGĂ VALERIU GAFENCU, SFÂNTUL ÎNCHISORILOR

– Mărturia unui fost socialist –

Mc. VALERIU
+ 1952

ПОУЧ. ІІІС.
СРѢТЕЛ.